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SECURITY INFORMATION

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
OFFICE OF NATIONAL ESTIMATES

14 August 1952

STAFF MEMORANDUM NO. 263

SUBJECT: Letter from [REDACTED] 25X1A

25X1A Although presumably not written for publication, the following letter from [REDACTED] seems of sufficient interest to warrant general distribution. Needless to say, it has not been subjected to any part of the O/NE review process and consequently is "too full of words", is "organizationally confused" and lacks "estimative precision."

[REDACTED] 25X1A9a

7 August 1952

"My apologies for not having come through sooner with a brief statement on conditions in the Near East. In part this churlishness has been the result of uncertainty about your address (and I hope this gets through to you) and the rather hectic nature of our weekends — was in Damascus last weekend and will motor up to Aleppo and Latakia this weekend, to cite but an example. Not the least of the causes, though, is the insidious nature of the lotus eater's life available here, where I can sit on my balcony watching the ships go by or scramble down the steps to the beach in five minutes or so. I must confess a slight but unmistakable twinge of conscience on reflecting how hard you guys must be working this summer.

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In a strict sense the course itself is a disappointment: the lectures tend to be rather elementary, and the library -- presumably because of shortage of funds -- is none too strong on up-to-date English materials on the region. Even so, it is quite something to be exposed, on the spot, to the hopes, fears, and prejudices which this area is generating. The distrust of the French and the British, the parochialism of the various groups making up the population, the preoccupation with Palestine, which people tend to worry over the way someone keeps running his tongue over the place from which a tooth has just been removed -- all these feelings are presumably moderated and changed in the case of [REDACTED] which contains some very competent people quite consciously dedicated to the idea of trying to get Arab students to look at their problems rationally. Nevertheless, the force of their emotionalism is tremendous. Some say frankly that the only salvation for the Arab world is the destruction of Israel -- and that the connivance of the US in such a program is not only the sine qua non for the restoration of US prestige and influence in the area but also a kind of touch stone which will make all things easy. Most favor the development of a unified Arab state, doing away with the artificial boundaries of the mandate period -- and at the same time show symptoms in themselves of the conflicting loyalties which make such an outcome dubious. A few define the Near East as including the Arab world as what we take it to be -- nobody includes Turkey or Iran -- but others would exclude Egypt and the Arabian peninsula from the definition, others would exclude Iraq and Jordan, and one man -- though generally favorable to the idea of Arab unity -- quite frankly confessed that the world he was loyal to was a Christian Lebanon in an Arab sea. Most striking of all, perhaps, is the sense of dependence on Western actions here and the absence of any sentiment for Arab self-help. I've encountered one Moslem law professor who is working for liberalization of Islamic legal matters, one economics professor who feels that the Arabs must accept the cruel world about them and work for their own salvation, and one student, (an energetic Moslem who did labor union work in mandate Palestine, fought against the Jews in Jerusalem and the Gaza area, and later worked for UNRWA among the refugees) who is imbued with the idea that the Arabs must bestir themselves. Otherwise, people tend to get wound up with proving that they were robbed and cheated -- which is often enough quite true but not necessarily a useful piece of intellectual effort.

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Before I get involved in those nice little questions of whether the tide of nationalism can be slowed or channeled at this late day and of what happens if you give the Arabs the freedom of action and the absence of foreign influence which they seek -- subjects not for this letter if I want to get it off -- I might say that I've been having a fine time with the tourisms. The weekend field trips [REDACTED] have tended to be too heavily archeological and cultural, but I've managed some good trips as well with aid of friends who can procure transport. One trip up to the Cedars of Lebanon provided a terrific panorama of what can be done with terracing of fields -- all this in the heart of the Maronite area. I got in on a long dusty motor tour to Amman via Damascus, with a short side trip into the Jebel Druze, have been to Damascus a couple of times and should be able to round out Levantine impressions with this weekend's trip to Aleppo. Two signs of the times, neither of which I reacted to fast enough to photograph: a presumably young camel riding along in a station wagon and a shop window in Amman marked ARMS, AMMUNITIONS, ASSORTED GROCERIES. "

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Bob

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